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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000777

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SUBJECT: OJO MADUEKWE GIVES AMBASSADOR PDP SPIN ON ELECTION

Classified By: Ambassador Campbell for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: PDP Secretary General Ojo Maduekwe assured the Ambassador that the results of the 2007 election reflected the will of the Nigerian people, although he made no effort to defend the controversial election process or the announced results. The elections, Maduekwe argued, were the culmination of a process which was manipulated by all involved, especially governors, and were exacerbated by INEC's incompetence and lack of preparation. Nonetheless international criticism of the elections, he claimed, only worked to undermine the democratic process in the eyes of Nigerians, robs the incoming President of legitimacy, and encourages the possibility of a non-democratic intervention by the Nigerian military. Maduekwe said that too many outsiders lack a good understanding of developing country realities in places like Nigeria, where a winner take all mentality prevails. End summary.

AMBASSADOR SEEKS A FRANK ASSESSMENT FROM LONGTIME CONTACT

¶2. (C) In a one-hour meeting on April 24, with the Ambassador, PDP Party Secretary General Ojo Maduekwe shared his views on the Nigerian elections, and his reactions to criticisms of its shortcomings and challenges facing the incoming President. Maduekwe, who has known the Ambassador for 20 years, put a positive spin on the elections as he attempted to provide an explanation and context for the controversial process and outcome surrounding the just completed electoral process.

¶3. (C) In his conversation with the Ambassador, Maduekwe made no effort to defend the specific numbers announced by INEC, especially the 24 million votes received by Governor Yar'Adua. He did echo a theme made in President Obasanjo's speech to the nation on April 23, by saying that Umaru Yar'Adua "would have won anyway." (Comment: Obasanjo said: "Judging from the poll result of local and international pollster, the results that have so far been declared have not deviated materially from the average projections of these polls. End Comment) Maduekwe said that Obasanjo's speech was, in part, a result of the conversation between President Obasanjo and Madeleine Albright in which she raised the issue of electoral irregularities.

¶4. (C) Many electoral shortcomings, Maduekwe told the Ambassador, were a result of INEC incompetence, and were exacerbated by an environment of competitive rigging. Maduekwe claimed that "all" the governors from all the parties were involved in the rigging, especially he noted, his arch enemy Orji Kalu the outgoing governor of Abia state

whose chosen successor defeated the PDP candidate.

PRE-ELECTION CONSIDERATIONS, POST ELECTION CONCERNS

¶5. (C) Maduekwe says that President Obasanjo had thought deeply about finding a successor, and that his decision was informed by the lessons of his turnover in 1979, in which his successor government proceeded to plunder the treasury and mismanage the country. As a result of this experience, Obasanjo took great stock in Yar'Adua because he did not loot his state. Maduekwe explained that the reality of Nigeria and many other developing countries is that a comment by a leader can be construed to be an order and exaggerated for personal gain by those in the corridors of power. This environment, Maduekwe argued, is also characterized by a winner take all mentality, where little is left to chance and compromise is seen as a sign of weakness.

¶6. (C) Maduekwe professed to being concerned that international criticism of the elections will undermine the legitimacy of the democratic process in the eyes of Nigerians. He also suggested that the criticism questioning the credibility of the elections will deprive the incoming President of legitimacy. This could also, he suggested, embolden the Nigerian military to contemplate an undemocratic intervention.

¶7. (C) Maduekwe also said that Americans should also not misread any future comments by "hard-liners" close to Yar'Adua which might equate U.S. criticism of the just-completed Nigerian elections as symptomatic of on-going U.S. anti-Muslim bias.

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¶8. (C) Comment: Maduekwe argued that Governor Yar'Adua would have won anyway without the electoral irregularities or rigging. We have heard before the argument that international criticism will undermine the legitimacy of democracy in Nigeria or that the elections should be evaluated from the perspective that Nigeria is a developing country. At present, we cannot identify who the "hard-liners" are who might equate U.S criticism of the election of a future Yar'Adua government as a reflection of an anti-Islamic bias.

CAMPBELL